

Chairman Waukau's Notes August 2002

Poso My Fellow Menominees:

The major issue confronting the Tribe back in February when the new administration came into office was the budget. The Tribe had expanded programs and the budget allocations back in the early nineties when the casino dollars were rolling in. By the late nineties the Tribe was funding over \$12 million to the programs and since we don't have the casino making that kind of money any more and we don't want to continue to draw down on our reserves, we need to get the red pen out and make some major cuts. The Legislature sent the issue to the Budget Committee and they have done a Herculean job and made very difficult and thoughtful decisions. And they did what the Legislature asked them to do and that was weighing what we could afford versus what we wanted. They balanced the budget without drawing down on the Tribe's reserves. What makes this work particularly difficult is that we are forced to cut back existing program funding, and we are also forced to eliminate totally some existing programs and this all translates to reductions in the tribal work force. Laying off staff is the most difficult part of this job. Adding to an already tough financial environment is that there has been an almost 25% increase in health insurance. This points to the fact that the Tribe must be very thoughtful when we add new programs and positions because the time may come when we are forced to cut back. And that's where we find our selves now. By the time you read this the Legislature will have studied the recommendations of the Budget Committee and voted their recommendations up or down.

I attended a ceremony at the CBRF this week and had the privilege of giving the Caregiver of the Year award to Tenaes Washinawatok, the daughter of Allen and Karen Washinawatok. Tenaes takes her job of caregiver to our elders very seriously and does over and above what is expected even checking on her clients on the weekends. Congratulations Tenaes.

Schools throughout the Reservation started the day after Labor Day so summer is officially over for another year, but the good news is that means Packer season is finally here. We need to drive more conscientiously as the youngsters walk to schools. Sometimes small children don't pay attention to the traffic so we need to be more vigilant. Fall sports are in full swing and I am going to find some time to watch the Eagles play football and volleyball, and if the cross country team has a home meet they are always fun to cheer on. Homecoming week will be here before we know it, so please hide the toilet paper from those high school seniors.

The election season is rapidly approaching. The hot race in the state is the Democratic Primary. Locally, we will have a face-off between Beth Moses and Sid Lepscier for County Sheriff, MTE Board of Director positions are open, and of course, the Tribal Legislature primary is in November. Apesanahkwat, Gene Caldwell, and Sylvia Wilber are the three legislative members whose terms expire next February 8th. The Tribal Legislature is moving forward with our off Reservation gaming facility. At a special Legislative meeting on August 28th, Legislators Besaw, Caldwell, and Waukau were appointed as the team to bird dog the process. The Caldwell position will be a rotating position so that each Legislator will have the opportunity to sit in on this very important committee. This approach will keep every Legislator in the information loop. Gary and I will be permanent members. I will keep the Menominee people informed every step of the way through the Chairman's Notes and through the quarterly community meetings.

Sincerely,

Lisa Waukau
Honorable Tribal Chairman